

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 2459

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LE, IS, SY, PLO
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION

REF: STATE 76882

1. I CALLED ON ALLON AT 1300 HOURS APRIL 7 TO DISCUSS
SOUTH LEBANON AND MADE THE POINTS CONTAINED IN PARA 2 OF
REFTEL. ALSO PRESENT WERE MFA DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL
EVRON AND INTELLIGENCE AND POLICY PLANNING DIRECTOR RAVIV.

2. ALLON SAID THEY WOULD CONSIDER MY PRESENTATION AND
WOULD GIVE US A FULL AND COMPLETE RESPONSE AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE. HOWEVER, HE WISED TO GIVE US IMMEDIATELY
THEIR FIRST-HAND REACTION AND ASKED RAVIV TO REVIEW THE
CURRENT SITUATION, ACCORDING TO THE LATEST ISRAELI
INFORMATION. RAVIV CONFIRMED REPORTS THAT TAYYIBAH

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HAD FALLEN TO THE PLESTINIANS AND INDICATED THAT AN
ATTACK IS CONTINUING AGAINST AL KHIYAM. HE SAID ISRAEL
DREW SEVERAL CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RECENT ACTIVITY;
A) THERE CAN BE NO ACTIVITY IN THE AREA WITHOUT THE
PERMISSION OF THE SYRIANS--SERIOUS CHANGES CAN BE
AFFECTED BY SYRIAN ACQUIESCENCE BUT WITHOUT DIRECT
ACTION BY THE SYRIAN FORCES; B) BECAUSE THE CHRISTIANS

HAVE NO ORGANIZED FORCES, THEIR COUNTER ATTACKS HAVE FAILED; C) WHILE (LEBANESE) POLICE ACTION MIGHT HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT EARLIER, THERE ARE NOW 5,000 PLO TROOPS WHO REPRESENT AN ORGANIZED FORCE; D) THERE IS NOW FULL COORDINATION BETWEEN FATAH AND THE REJECTIONISTS; AND E) SYRIA'S "LOOKING THE OTHER WAY" HAS CREATED THE FACT OF A NEW SITUATION.

3. ALLON THEN COMMENTED THAT WHEN SYRIA BEGAN ITS MOVES IN LEBANON, HE TOLD FORMER SECRETARY KISSINGER THAT SYRIA WOULD ENTER LEBANON UNDER THE PRETEXT OF ENFORCING LAW AND ORDER AND OF DEFENDING THE CHRISTIANS, BUT WHEN ITS GOALS WERE ACHIEVED IT WOULD TURN BACK TO ITS TRADITIONAL ALLIES. WHILE HE WAS NOT YET READY TO SAY THAT POINT HAD BEEN REACHED, ISRAELI INFORMATION IS THAT THE SYRIANS ARE TOLERATING THE REINFORCEMENT OF THE PLO BY NOT RESTRICTING ITS MOVEMENT, ITS NUMBERS, NOR ITS WEAPONS. THEY ARE PROBABLY DOING THIS IN ORDER TO COMPENSATE THE PLO FOR HAVING PROHIBITED THEIR ACTIVITIES IN THE NORTH, AND ALSO PROBABLY FOR NOT HAVING LIVED UP TO THE CAIRO AGREEMENT.

4. THE LAST THING THAT ISRAEL WANTS, ALLON CONTINUED, IS A FLARE-UP. IF ISRAEL HAD BEEN SEEKING AN EXCUSE TO INTERVENE IN LEBANON IT HAD MANY CHANCES TO DO SO IN THE PAST. WHILE THE DESIRED WITHDRAWAL FROM NABATIYA WAS NOT COMPLETELY CARRIED OUT, ISRAEL HAD BEEN REASONABLY WELL SATISFIED WITH THE SITUATION IN
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SOUTH LEBANON UNTIL NOW.

5. ALLON THEN LISTED ACTIONS WHICH HE SAID ISRAEL CANNOT TOLERATE: A) SARKIS MUST NOT USE THE PRESENT SITUATION TO MOVE INTRA-ARAB FORCES (MOSTLY SYRIAN, ALLON REMARKED) FURTHER SOUTH; B) THE PLO CANNOT BE PERMITTED TO ATTACK TARGETS IN ISRAEL, EITHER BY PENETRATION OR BY SHELLING; C) THERE CAN BE NO MASSACRE OF THE CHRISTIANS IN SOUTH LEBANON (ISRAEL CANNOT TOLERATE THIS BECAUSE OF THE VALUE IT ATTACHES TO HUMAN LIVES AND BECAUSE THE MASSACRE OF CHRISTIANS WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD TO KILLINGS OF SHIITES, DRUZE AND EVENTUALLY JEWS, SOMETHING A JEWISH STATE COULD NOT TOLERATE); AND D) THE GOOD FENCE CANNOT BE CLOSED.

6. IN CONSIDERING THE GOALS OF THE PLO IN SOUTH LEBANON, ALLON SAID THERE ARE SEVERAL POSSIBILITIES: THE PLO CAN BE ATTEMPTING TO RECOVER MOSLEM VILLAGES, TO CAPTURE CHRISTIAN OR MIXED CHRISTIAN/MOSLEM TOWNS,

OR SIMPLY TO GET CLOSER TO THE GOOD FENCE. IN CONSIDERING ISRAEL'S COURSE OF ACTION, ALLON SAID THAT ACTION DEPENDS ON HOW THE SITUATION DEVELOPS. IN ANY CASE, ISRAEL WILL NOT UNDERTAKE EXCESSIVE ACTION BUT ONLY THAT WHICH IS APPROPRIATE TO MEET THE SITUATION WHICH HAS BEEN CREATED. IF SYRIA CAN CALM DOWN THE PRESENT SITUATION, THERE WILL BE NO FURTHER PROBLEMS AND ISRAEL WILL DO ITS BEST TO CONTROL THE SITUATION.

7. ALLON SAID IT IS HIS OPINION THAT THE CHRISTIANS ARE NOT ACTUALLY SEEKING TO BROADEN THEIR ENCLAVE. HE SAID ISRAEL ADVISES THE CHRISTIANS NOT TO GO BEYOND SELF-DEFENSE MEASURES AND BELIEVES THAT IT IS ABLE TO EXERCISE SOME RESTRAINT ON THEM. (IN FACT, HE SAID, ISRAEL SOMETIMES EXERTS AN INFLUENCE "STRONGER THAN ADVISING?") IN SUM, ISRAEL IS TRYING TO BE A STABILIZING FORCE.

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8. GENERAL RAVIV THEN ADDED TWO CLARIFYING POINTS:
A) SOMETIMES MOSLEM VILLAGES HAVE APPROACHED CHRISTIANS TO SEEK THEIR SUPPORT AND THIS WOULD PERHAPS APPEAR TO BE AN EFFORT BY THE CHRISTIANS TO EXPAND THEIR TERRITORY. HOWEVER, THIS HAS BEEN VOLUNTARY ON THE PART OF THE MOSLEM VILLAGES AND NOT TRUE TO ANY CHRISTIAN PRESSURES; B) ISRAEL HAS NEVER SHELLED VILLAGES IN LEBANON. THERE HAD BEEN OCCASIONS OF RETALIATORY ARTILLERY FIRING FROM ISRAEL BUT IT HAD BEEN DIRECTED ONLY AT THE SOURCE OF PREVIOUS ARTILLERY FIRE INTO NORTHERN ISRAEL.

9. COMMENT: DURING THE COURSE OF HIS EXPOSITION, ALLON TOOK PAINS TO EMPHASIZE THAT ISRAEL HAD BEEN EXERCISING RESTRAINT IN ITS POLICY TOWARD LEBANON AND THAT HE HOPED THIS RESTRAINT COULD CONTINUE. IT WAS CLEAR, HOWEVER, FROM THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH HE MADE THE POINTS WHICH ISRAEL COULD NOT "TOLERATE" THAT SERIOUS CONSIDERATION IS BEING GIVEN TO FURTHER STEPS. THE ISRAELIS PROBABLY HAVE A GRUDGING ADMIRATION FOR THE SYRIANS WHOM THEY SEE AS LIKELY ABLE TO OBTAIN THEIR OBJECTIVES WITHOUT USING OR MOVING THEIR OWN FORCES IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD AFFORD ISRAEL A CASUS BELLI. IT IS ALSO CLEAR IN EVERY CONVERSATION WE HAVE ON LEBANON THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL RESIST ANY EFFORT TO CLOSE THE GOOD FENCE.
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